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SUBJECT: INTELLIGENCE SERVICES TO MERGE UNDER NEW LAW

11. (U) SUMMARY AND COMMENT: Croatia's Intelligence and Counterintelligence Agencies (OA and POA) will merge into a single Security and Intelligence Agency (SOA) under a new law adopted by Parliament on June 30. Tomislav Karamarko, the current head of POA and architect of the new law, is widely expected to be appointed as director of the new SAO when the law takes effect later this summer. While achieving Karamarko's goal of integrating key elements of the Croatian intelligence community, the law also preserved key checks on intelligence abuses. Croatia's Military Intelligence Agency (VOA) will become the Military Security and Intelligence Agency (VSOA) under the new law. END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

12. (SBU) Despite earlier speculations to the contrary, the new law regulating the work of the intelligence services preserved the institution and powers of the Civilian Oversight Council. Tin Gazivoda, a member of the Council and a well-known human rights activist, told the Embassy on July 3 that he was pleased with the level of protection against abuses: citizens and NGOs can bring controversial cases to the Council's attention, and the Council may react to abuses on its own initiative.

13. (SBU) While slightly liberalizing the approval process for surveillance activities, i.e. allowing the service director to order "soft" forms of monitoring such as photographing a person in a public place, all "hard" measures of monitoring such as wiretapping will still require approval of the Supreme Court. Gazivoda noted that the previous law adopted under the former government began the break from the abusive past of the former Yugoslav and early Croatian intelligence services, as it gave oversight authority to the Supreme Court and the civilian council. "It is my impression that the process of making the services less political and more professional gradually continues with this law," Gazivoda concluded.

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